

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

GEN. GORDON'S MEDITATIONS.  
REFLECTIONS IN PALESTINE 1851. By CHARLES  
GEORGE GORDON. 16mo. pp. x. 134. Macmillan &  
Co.

The notes contained in this small volume—the book consists of short and often fragmentary notes rather than of connected essays—are described in the Preface as "the fruits of meditation and inquiry," during General Gordon's stay in the Holy Land last year. They have been revised and put together for the press by some of the author's friends, not only with his sanction but by "his express wish and injunction" in the hope that they may promote religious inquiry and "show forth God's dwelling in us." The first few pages, devoted to the topography of Jerusalem, are interesting and ingenious, but need not detain us. The most significant of the redactions are grouped under the head "Religions," and begin with a prayer that the Almighty Father will vouchsafe to reveal himself unto us in these pages, so far as they are in accordance with his word." Whatever may be thought of the intrinsic value of General Gordon's remarks, there can be no question about their importance as indications of a character which has suddenly become of consequence to the world.

The key-note of his religious method is sounded in the opening observations upon the necessity of a close and continuous study of the Bible. "How few forget to take their daily meals," he writes; "yet we starve our souls, though they require their portion which is the Word of God." We spend too much time over the words of man, over sermons, commentaries, opinions of preachers, explanations of texts; and it may be for this reason that there are so many theological differences. To know the Bible is the secret of life and understanding. Not reading the Bible is the root of all ignorance. Like many another devout and absorbed student of the sacred Scriptures, General Gordon shows a marked fondness for the interpretation of symbols, and for the acceptance of these interpretations, which may be only fanciful suggestions, as the revelations of heaven and the rules of conduct. When he has found a parallel is satisfied that he has proved a proposition. In his application of the analogies of the Old Testament to the New, in particular, he pursues a line of reasoning—or perhaps was ought to say dogmatizing—which curiously reminds us of the exegetical exercises of the patristic schools. The events of Scripture, according to his view, are so closely connected that if we study them properly, "by God and the Holy Ghost," we shall discover a fixed series of occurrences, regularly repeated, from the first three days of creation all through the history of the Church and through our individual lives; indeed, if we studied well we might even learn through these repetitions the things to come. The topics to which he especially applies himself are the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, both of which ought to be studied in connection with Genesis. Water, he observes, "must be the connection of Baptism with some event prior to the fall, and that event is creation," the calling forth of the earth out of the waters by the word of God; and Holy Communion, in like manner, is connected by the act of eating, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We need not follow him in this course of interpretation, because, although his analogies are ingenious, his method is of venerable age, and can be applied to the support of a countless variety of theological opinions. But now and then the fervor of General Gordon's belief in his own conclusions pushes him to remarkable statements. He leans to literalism, if not to positive materialism, in some of his readings, and the combination of the mystical and the materialistic tendencies is at times very curious. He says that he was "troubled for years to know what Baptism meant," and while this part of his "Reflections" is not entirely clear, it would seem that one of his difficulties was about the physical effect of the water. "Somehow I think both Baptism and Holy Communion have very much to do with the body, for the elements in each sacrament are inseparable from the body, the elements in one case being externally, in the other, internally, applied." "I think, in Baptism, the adult who wishes to be free of his carnal nature, and who believes in Jesus and is baptized, does receive the Holy Ghost in his body." The elements in one case by which he obtains the benefit to his body being bread and wine, the elements by which he puts off the body of his flesh in the other being the water. The elements in both sacraments are material, and both are sanctified to the body by the Holy Ghost, one for sustenance of life in Christ, the other for resurrection from the dead in Christ, the new Adam." This is quite in harmony with his declaration that the trees in the Garden of Eden were sacramental trees, endued for a time with mystic properties, and that when Eve ate the forbidden fruit, "she was poisoned by evil introduced into her actual body"; that the poison affected every portion of her body; and that in her fall it was the body of man which was poisoned, and not the soul, which, however, became dormant, or dead, owing to its oneness with the body. "Holy Communion is an antidote to the poison," an actual substance to be eaten, taken into the poisoned body, assimilated with it, and which actual substance is *hidden* to be eaten by Christ, and is the vehicle or conduit by which Christ imparts his divine attributes to that poisoned body; just as much as the *forbidden* fruit was the vehicle or conduit by which Satan impeded his evil attributes to that body and poisoned it." Still more striking is General Gordon's pantheistic estimate of the soul: "I believe that the Divine breathing into Adam (which breathing made him differ from all animals) was the breathing into him of certain existences of God's nature; that these existences or souls were of God, as existing and derived from him, and consequently God's; that in time each of these souls were incarnated in bodies, but that through the fall these bodies with which they were clothed were sinful and had carnal desires; that the only difference between Christ and man is that, in the case of Christ, he was the fullness of the Godhead in a sinless body, and that man is of God (equally though inferiorly a son) in sinful flesh or body; that the fall caused the death or dormant state to fall on all these souls, in which state they would have remained, unless Christ offered his body as a substitute for their bodies' transgressions."

It is impossible to read these "Reflections" without receiving a vivid impression of the sincerity, the earnestness, the piety, the high-mindedness of the writer. To him an active and pervading Providence is the first of realities in all the affairs of life—the Almighty and his creatures are in continuous contact; every event is but a part of a divinely ordered chain of events, of which there exists an inspired explanation legible by the devout reader; the Holy Ghost is perpetually instructing us; as God led the chosen people through the wilderness by visible interferences in their behalf, so he continues to direct and sustain his children in secular concerns and by physical agencies; but with the trust which befits the Christian character, General Gordon unites the rash and narrow self-confidence of the fanatic. "I am going to work out the fall for you," he writes at the beginning of one of his toughest speculative expositions. "I feel now quite satisfied about this matter," he says of the problem of the Holy Ghost; "and I account for the same not being seen by others (i.e. not being shown to them by the Holy Ghost), by people not reading the Scriptures." Reduced to its simplest expression, his theory of faith and conduct is that the careful student of the Bible, being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, cannot be misled. This is a theory by which a great many enthusiasts have unwittingly been governed, and it has often conducted them to heroic deeds. But if it has been the parent of great errors; and it requires little penetration to perceive that it has involved General Gordon in some dangerous confusion.

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